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δ^{13} C and δ^{18} O Isotopic Composition of CaCO₃ Measured by Continuous Flow Isotope Ratio Mass Spectrometry: Statistical Evaluation and Verification by Application to Devils Hole Core DH-11 Calcite.

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FAX: 703-648-5274; e-mail: krevesz@usgs.gov; jmlandwe@usgs.gov **Abstract**

A new method was developed to analyze the stable carbon and oxygen isotope ratios of small samples ($400\pm20~\mu g$) of calcium carbonate. This new method streamlines the classical phosphoric acid – calcium carbonate (H_3PO_4 – $CaCO_3$) reaction method by making use of a recently available Thermoquest-Finnigan GasBench II* preparation device and a Delta Plus XL continuous flow isotope ratio mass spectrometer. Conditions for which the H_3PO_4 – $CaCO_3$ reaction produced reproducible and accurate results with minimal error had to be determined. When the acid-carbonate reaction temperature was kept at 26°C and the reaction time was between 24 and 54 hours, the precision of the carbon and oxygen isotope ratios for pooled samples from 3 reference standard materials was •0.1 and •0.2 per mill or ‰, respectively, although later analysis showed that materials from one specific standard required reaction time between 34 and 54 hours for $\delta^{18}O$ to achieve this level of precision. Aliquot screening methods were shown to further minimize the total error. The accuracy and precision of the new method were analyzed and confirmed by statistical analysis.

The utility of the method was verified by analyzing calcite from Devils Hole, Nevada, for which isotope-ratio values previously had been obtained by the classical method. Devils Hole core DH-11 recently had been re-cut and re-sampled, and isotope-ratio values were obtained using the new method. The results were comparable to those obtained by the classical method with correlation = +0.96 for both isotope ratios. The consistency of the isotopic results is such that an alignment offset could be identified in the re-sampled core material, and two cutting errors that occurred during re-sampling then were confirmed independently. This result indicates that the new method is a viable alternative to the classical reaction method. In particular, the new method requires less sample material permitting finer resolution and allows automation of some processes resulting in considerable time savings.

Introduction

Calcium carbonate or calcite (CaCO₃) can be analyzed for the stable isotopes of carbon-13 and oxygen-18 to determine the ratios of the rare (usually the heavy) to the more common (usually the light) isotopes. The classical method used to obtain carbon and oxygen isotope ratios in calcite¹ is labor intensive and requires relatively large sample sizes (10-20 mg). Samples are loaded in a y-shaped vessel with 100 % phosphoric acid

* Use of the brand, firm, or trade names in this report is for identification purposes only and does not constitute endorsement by the U.S. Geological Survey. 1 McCrea, J.M., J. *Chem. Phys.* 1950;**18:** 849-857.

(2 ml) in one branch and the carbonate sample in the other. The vessel is evacuated on a vacuum line and placed in a constant temperature bath (25 ± 0.1 °C). When the temperature stabilizes, each vessel is oriented in such a way as to have the acid flow and react with the carbonate sample following the equation

$$CaCO_{3(s)} + H_3PO_{4(l)} \cdot CaHPO_{4(s)} + H_2O_{(l,g)} + CO_{2(g)}.$$
 (1)

The reaction of acid with calcite produces solid calcium hydrogen phosphate, liquid water, and two gases, water vapor, and carbon dioxide. First, both gases are frozen in liquid nitrogen. The frozen gases then are exposed to a dry ice slush, and the carbon dioxide sublimates while the water stays frozen. After two iterations of melting and then freezing of the gases, it is possible to remove the water vapor from the carbon dioxide. At this point, the carbon dioxide can be analyzed with a dual-inlet isotope ratio mass spectrometer (DI-IRMS).

A mass spectrometer is used to determine the ratio (R) of the heavy isotope to the light isotope in a sample. The value or proportional difference from a standard is used for reporting stable isotope abundances and variations. Carbon and oxygen isotope data are reported as differences in parts per thousand (per mill or ‰) from their respective reference materials. The value is defined as

$$\delta_x = \left(\frac{R_x - R_{std}}{R_{std}}\right) 10^3,\tag{2}$$

where $R_x = (C^{13}/C^{12})_x$ or $(O^{18}/O^{16})_x$ for the sample X, and R_{std} is the corresponding stable isotope ratio in the reference standard². The δ values for the carbon isotope ratio or $\delta^{13}C$ are reported relative to Vienna Peedee belemnite [VPDB] is defined by $\delta^{13}C_{NBS19/VPDB} = +1.95 \%^3$. The δ values for the oxygen isotope ratio or $\delta^{18}O$ are reported relative to Vienna Standard Mean Ocean Water [VSMOW; $\delta^{18}O_{VSMOW} = 0\%$] on a normalized scale using Standard Light Antarctic Precipitation [SLAP, $\delta^{18}O_{SLAP/VSMOW} = -55.5 \%^4$].

The classical preparation was streamlined to make use of robotic technologies and a more sensitive detection method referred to as continuous flow isotope ratio mass spectrometry (CF-IRMS). This new method uses 400 µg of calcite or 2 - 4 % of the sample required in the classical method and only 10 % of the acid previously required. To be viable, this new method should provide results that are similar in accuracy and precision to those of the classical method. The purpose of this report is to describe the development and application of this new method.

Methodology and Equipment

The new method makes use of a continuous flow isotope ratio mass spectrometer (CF-IRMS), the Thermoquest-Finnigan Delta Plus XL. Attached to this mass spectrometer is a preparation device (Thermoquest GasBench II) with a robotic sampling arm (CTC Combi-PAL) by which the sample is ultimately sent to the mass spectrometer. The calcium carbonate samples must first be properly prepared. The sample initially was

² Friedman, I., and O'Neil, J.R., U.S. Geological Survey Professional Paper 440-KK. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., Sixth Edition, edited by M. Fleischer. 1977; 12 p. plus illustrations.

³ Hut, G., Consultants' Group Meeting on Stable Isotope Reference Samples for Geochemical and Hydrological Investigations, Vienna, 16 to 18 September 1985. Report to Director General, International Atomic Energy Agency. 1987; 42 p. 4 Coplen, T.B., Chemical Geology. 1988, 72: 293.

dried in an oven at 90°C overnight to prevent any moisture from reacting with carbon dioxide and exchanging an oxygen atom. This drying needed to be done only once, providing that the dried sample was kept in a tightly sealed container when not in use. The sample vessels, 12.5 x 100 mm borosilicate glass (produced by Wheaton), also were dried in a 90°C oven for at least 24 hours. Once the vessels were removed from the oven, they were capped immediately to keep out the moisture. The glass vessels were washed before reuse. Each set of vessels was rinsed eight times with tap water and once with deionized (DI) water. An ultrasonic bath was filled with DI water and all of the vessels were submerged. The vessels were cleaned in the ultrasonic bath for 30 minutes, during which time the water was changed three times, and than removed, emptied and dried as described above.

Each dried sample was weighed on a microbalance in an aluminum boat with a target weight of $400 \pm 20~\mu g$. Each sample was transferred quantitatively to a clean and dried sample vessel and capped with a rubber septum (Labco Limited, Pierceable Rubber Wad, order code VC309)*. The rubber septum retains an airtight seal after being punctured with a needle. A sample set, consisting of up to 94 vessels containing calcium carbonate, was loaded into the GasBench II auto sampler. Each field sample was analyzed at least twice. Vessels containing one of three isotopically different reference materials were interspersed among the samples. No less than one set of reference materials for every eight unknowns was analyzed with weights in the same range as that of the samples.

After the set of samples and reference materials were assembled, vessels were loaded into the GasBench II tray. The Finnigan Isotope Data acquisition software (ISODAT 7.2) controls the GasBench II preparation device including the CF-IRMS. Vessels containing acid were also added to the tray. While carbonate and acid were in the GasBench II, the tray was kept at a constant 26.0 ± 0.1 °C. In this way the acid temperature was identical to that of the sample before it was added. The GasBench II then automatically and individually flushed the samples with helium using a needle to inject, displace and replace the air contained above the samples. Helium is the carrier gas for the CF-IRMS; it is inert and reacts with neither the sample nor the mass spectrometer. Helium has a common mass (4), which substantially is different than that of CO₂ (44).

After the flushing process was complete, acid was added to the calcium carbonate. To prevent any water oxygen atoms from exchanging with the carbon dioxide, only 100 % phosphoric acid (1.906 g/cc) was used. A gastight syringe was used to manually transfer 0.1 ml of acid into each sample vessel. Care was taken to keep the septum acid free. The samples were left to react with the acid for 24 hours and the resulting gases were analyzed automatically within 54 hours of the initial acid injection. The "method" in ISODAT was defined such that each individual sample had a sampling set of seven gas aliquots bracketed at both ends by three reference gas injections pulses (Figure 1). Subsequently, the data was exported from ISODAT to a laboratory information management system (LIMS)⁵, where the final sample values were computed. For each sample, LIMS computed the δX value relative to a working standard, ($\delta^{13}C$ or $\delta^{18}O$ relative to reference gas working standard, equation 2), by defining the R_{std} as the average of the six independently computed reference gas ratios that bracketed each sample set. A correction was applied to δX to normalize the data relative to VPDB ($\delta^{13}C$) and relative to

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⁵ Coplen, T.B., U.S. Geological Survey Open-File Report 00-345. 2000; 121p.

VSMOW (δ^{18} O). This was computed as the linear fit between the analytic results for the three reference standard materials and their known reference values relative to VPDB and VSMOW, respectively. If the standard deviation among the seven computed δ values of an analysis was larger than the accepted limit (0.1 and 0.2 % for δ^{13} C and δ^{18} O, respectively), the analysis was rejected. Similarly, if the difference between the averaged values computed for the two samples aliquots was not within the accepted limits, then the sample was re-analyzed. When sample results were in the correct range, the isotopic ratio was computed on the basis of the 14 gas aliquot results, and the average ratio will have a standard deviation of less than 0.03 and 0.06 ‰, for δ^{13} C and δ^{18} O, respectively.

The reaction conditions ultimately chosen after a series of experiments were to maintain the acid reaction at a constant temperature of 26°C and for a minimum duration of 24 hours but the maximum duration less than 54 hours. Originally, the samples were reacted at 65°C, approximately the temperature suggested by the equipment manufacturer. At that temperature, reacted overnight, the carbon isotope ratios for the reference materials were reproducible and accurate, but the oxygen isotope ratios were neither accurate (approximate difference of +3 ‰; -8 ‰; -4 ‰ from reference value of NBS-18; NBS-19 and USGS Working Standard, respectively) nor reproducible (standard deviation was 1.88 ‰ among sample runs) (Figure 2).

The question is whether hot acid reaction for a shorter time would produce acceptable values. The equipment available did not allow this set-up to be automatically configured; therefore, the acid injection procedure was done manually in the proper timely manner. Shortening the reaction time to 1.5 hours improved the reproducibility and accuracy of the oxygen isotope ratios obtained for the working standard material (Figure 2), but the standard deviation of the 7 gas aliquots within an analysis for both isotopes were only marginally acceptable (0.21 and 0.27‰ for δ^{13} C and δ^{18} O, respectively). This combination of time and temperature has potential if proper equipment is available (e.g. 2 arm robot system) and the difficulty of handling high temperature water vapor (e.g. clogging capillary tubes) can be overcome.

Using a lower reaction temperature (R.Yam, private communication, 2000) and a minimum 24-hour reaction time, allowed reproducible isotope standards within acceptable range for both, carbon and oxygen (Figure 3). Because the reaction time affected the oxygen isotope ratios, but not the carbon isotope ratios, it suggests that an exchange reaction for the oxygen isotope occurs during the overnight acid reaction period. Since the shortened reaction time of 1.5 hours at 65 °C gave acceptable, albeit imprecise results, suggests that this secondary reaction must have a kinetic component. Therefore, lowering the reaction temperature should inhibit or slow down this secondary reaction. It is important to note that all samples were analyzed within 54 hours of acid injection. (Indeed, all but four were analyzed within 47 hours). Because of the kinetic component of the reaction, the method presented in this work should be considered to have an upper bound of 54 hours allowed for reaction time.

Analysis of Reference Standards

The three reference standard samples were interspersed among field samples that were analyzed over a five-month period under the identified experimental conditions of 26°C temperature and overnight (•24 hours) reaction time with acid before analysis. All results of the reference standards were collected into a single dataset, for further analysis, in order to determine the capability of the new method to provide long term accurate and precise results. The three reference standards used in this work -- NBS-18, USGS Working Standard and NBS-19 -- have different isotopic signatures; ordered by

increasing values of $\delta^{^{13}}C$ and $\delta^{^{18}}O$. NBS-18 with $\delta^{^{13}}C_{_{VPDB}} = -5\%$ and $\delta^{^{18}}O_{_{VSMOW}} = 7.2\%$, the USGS Working Standard with $\delta^{13}C_{\text{VPDB}} = 1.35$ % and $\delta^{18}O_{\text{VSMOW}} = 22.43$ %, and NBS-19 with $\delta^{13}C_{\text{VPDB}} = 1.95\%$ and $\delta^{18}O_{\text{VSMOW}} = 28.65\%$. Results were inspected graphically (using Grapher version 3 and KaleidaGraph version 3.5 software), and subjected to formal statistical analysis (using Minitab version 10xtra software as well as simple statistics from KaleidaGraph version 3.5 software) to assess bias, precision, total error, effect of sample amount, homogeneity of samples, as well as the effect of the duration of the reaction time from the time the acid was added to a sample up to the time when the sample was analyzed in the mass spectrometer.

A total of 88 samples were analyzed for the three standards: 23 of NBS-18, 39 of the USGS Working Standard and 26 of NBS-19. Samples amounts were weighed carefully to be ~ 0.40 mg; the average of the 88 samples was 0.42 ± 0.02 mg, ranging from 0.37 to 0.48 mg. The reaction time was calculated from lab records and noted along with the sample results. Since the analytical procedure for each sample includes seven gas aliquots to the IRMS, a total of 616 = (7x88) analyses were made for the three reference standards, with 161 for NBS-18, 276 for the USGS Working Standard, and 182 for NBS-19.

The IRMS produces voltage-time (Volts-seconds) peaks for each gas aliquot, where the integrated peak area at the first sample injection is a function of the amount of sample material. The cumulative peak areas produced by the subsequent six other injections diminish in size (Figures 1 and 4). However, the area of the first injection peak is not simply a linear function of the amount of sample material: the linear correlation coefficient between the amount of sample and the first peak was only 0.22, suggesting that some factor in addition to any error in weighing confounded this relation. The estimates of δ^{13} C and δ^{18} O for each of the seven injections of all 88 analyses by the three reference standards plotted as a function of the cumulative spectrometric peak area for the injection, in volts-seconds (Vs) units is shown in Figure 4. The area ranges predominantly from ~20 to ~5 Vs (maximum/minimum ratio = 4) which indicates that the linearity of the mass spectrometer was acceptable and the experimental conditions (ISODAT method, Process File, He flow rate, needle size⁶) were set correctly. In addition, regardless of the initial peak area value, and that of the six subsequent peaks, their minimum value was constrained, suggesting that even a potentially broad range in the sample amount (0.1 - 0.4 mg) could produce accurate and reproducible results. Figure 4 demonstrates that the results for the USGS Working Standard (Figure 4c) were more variable and negatively biased than for either NBS-18 or NBS-19 (Figures 4a and 4b respectively), even though the isotopic signature of this material is bracketed by the other two. This may reflect the differing mineral composition or grain size of the material.

In order to permit comparisons between reference standards, analytic results were expressed in terms of bias, that is, the difference between the analytic isotopic estimate and the known isotopic reference standard value. Table 1 provides a statistical summary of results for the 88 samples, with results for δ^{13} C summarized in Table 1a, and for δ^{18} O in Table 1b. The average bias, the standard deviation of the averaged bias which is called the standard error of the bias and the standard deviation of the bias values are shown when results from all three-reference standards are treated as one set. Results are also summarized for each reference standard set separately, because an analysis of variance rejected (p•0.001) the hypothesis of equal average bias among analyses categorized by

⁶ K.Revesz, J.M. Landwehr and J. Kebly. USGS Open File Report N:01-257. 2001.

reference standard. Also, individual analyses were pooled by their sample sets of seven injections, and a bias and standard deviation for these respective sets computed. In addition to the average bias, the average standard deviation for the pooled samples is shown because it is the standard deviation of the pooled set that determines whether or not an aliquot is accepted. Finally, it was seen that the correlation between the amount of sample material and the area of the first injection peak increased from 0.22 to ~0.50 in the case of analyses run with a reaction time between 34-54 hours, suggesting some stabilizing factor with longer reaction time. Consequently, the pooled sets were separated into categories by reaction time, from 24 to 34 hours and from 34 to 54 hours, to determine what, if any, effect is obtained with longer reaction times.

It can be seen that the estimate of $\delta^{13}C$ appeared to be unbiased (confirmed by t-test, with p<0.05) over the set of all analyses and all pooled analyses, but the results differed when examined by reference standard (Table 1a). The results for NBS-18 are unbiased, the results for the USGS Working Standard negatively biased and the results for NBS-19 positively biased, but the absolute value of the average bias is < 0.1‰. The difference in bias between samples with reaction times of 24-34 hours and those with reaction time 34-54 hours was neither large nor significant (confirmed by F-test using p•0.05), except for NBS-18 for which the average bias went from a small positive value to a small negative value but one that was indistinguishable from 0. As expected, pooling reduced the standard deviation of the set, although the standard error of the bias remains at 0.01 ‰. The standard deviation of the bias is •0.1‰ for each reference category. Thus, for $\delta^{13}C$, the analyses precisely and accurately reproduce the reference standard values within the desired tolerance (•0.1‰).

The results for δ^{18} O analyses are summarized in Table 1b. It is seen that the average bias was not zero (rejected by t-test, at p<0.05 level) for either the set of all analyses or the set of pooled analyses. This is because, although the results for both NBS-18 and NBS-19 are unbiased, those for the USGS Working Standard indicate a negative bias that was larger than the desired tolerance of 0.2‰. However, when samples were categorized by reaction time, those run with a reaction time 24-34 hours were significantly negatively biased but those with reaction time 34-54 hours were unbiased. The standard error and the standard deviation were larger for the δ^{18} O analyses than for δ^{13} C. Furthermore, for both NBS-19 and the USGS Working Standard, the standard deviations were greater than the desired tolerance of 0.2‰ when considered overall samples, but diminished to less than 0.2‰ for samples with reaction time between 34-54 hours.

Results for all available analyses, without application of the additional screening rules applied to field sample aliquots described above are summarized in Table 1. We now consider how these results would change when the more rigorous screening rules that are used to determine aliquot acceptability are applied. In examining the data, in one analysis set (1% of 88) it was found that the integrated peak area of aliquot-7 was larger than aliquot-1 for the sample gas, possibly indicating incorrect sample preparation; consequently, that sample was discarded. According to the rules for examining aliquots stated above, if the standard deviation among the 7 injection results was >0.1 ‰ for δ^{13} C or >0.2 ‰ for δ^{18} O, the sample was not used. It was found that 14 (16%) of the remaining 87 samples failed with respect to this rule of which 3 (3%) failed just with respect to δ^{13} C, 10 (11%) failed just with respect δ^{18} O, and 1 (1%) failed with respect to both isotopes. In addition, two pooled samples (2%) were found to have an average δ^{18} O estimate differing from any other analysis for their respective standards by ~ 1.5‰ and

~0.7‰, respectively, which violates the • 0.2‰ screening rule for aliquots stated above. These samples were also removed from further consideration. All pooled samples had an average δ^{13} C value within • 0.1‰ and thus satisfied the screening rule adapted for aliquots as described above. Of the 17 discarded samples, 3 (13% of the initial 23) were for reference standard NBS-18, 9 (23% of 39) for the USGS Working Standard and 5 (19% of 26) for reference standard NBS-19. It was noted that all 17 samples that failed the screening rules had a reaction time between 24 and 34 hours.

Of the original 88 samples, 71 (>80%) satisfied the aliquot screening rules. A statistical summary of results for the 71 acceptable samples is provided in Table 2, which follows the format of Table 1. The results for δ^{13} C are summarized in Table 2a and are completely consistent with those in Table 1a, although with smaller average pooled standard deviation. The results for δ^{18} O are summarized in Table 2b. The results are unbiased (confirmed by t-test, with p<0.05) for all cases, except for samples from the USGS Working Standard, but even for this category the bias is within the desired tolerance of 0.2‰. Both the standard error and the standard deviation were larger among the δ^{18} O analyses than for δ^{13} C, but the standard deviation was also within the desired tolerance of 0.2% for NBS-18 and NBS-19 samples, although larger (0.31%) for the USGS Working Standard samples. Samples were separated by reaction time • 34 hours and > 34 hours. Results between the sets of shorter and longer reaction time differed more for samples from the USGS Working Standard, than for either NBS-18 or NBS-19. Samples run with the shorter reaction time were negatively biased at $\sim 0.2\%$ with a standard deviation of ~0.4‰, whereas those with reaction time >34 hours were unbiased (confirmed with t-test) with standard deviation 0.13%. (Note: we could not reject the hypothesis of equal means for the average bias for the USGS Working Standard, but this is a function of the large standard deviation associated with the shorter time samples.) Furthermore, an analysis of variance test among the samples analyzed at >34 hours could not reject the hypothesis of equality of average bias among reference standards, although it did so among those of •34 hour reaction time and for the entire pooled set. Thus, for δ^{18} O, when the screening rules are applied, samples from all three-reference standards produced unbiased results with minimum standard deviation (<0.2%), although it appears that the USGS Working Standard needs more reaction time for the method to perform correctly. However, given the kinetic nature of the reaction, these results cannot be extrapolated beyond 54 hours, the maximum analysis time of these experiments.

Table 3 shows the average root mean square error among all of the pooled samples, and when they were separated by reaction time. This statistic is a metric of the total error in an analysis and is defined as the square root of the sum of the squared bias and the estimated variance; effectively, it is the radius of a circle whose center is the true value of a reference where one coordinate axis is the bias, and the other is the standard deviation. The total error in the δ^{18} O is about twice as large in absolute value as that in δ^{13} C, and no significant reduction in error accrues from a longer reaction time in the case of δ^{13} C, but there is a reduction for δ^{18} O, especially in the case of the USGS Working Standard (Table 3). This metric cannot be used in the case of assessing an unknown sample, but is useful for screening results in the case of known reference standards, or for inter-laboratory comparisons.

Testing of Method by Application to Devils Hole Calcite

Calcite from Devils Hole, Nevada was used to test this new method. Devils Hole is a tectonic cave formed in the discharge zone of a regional carbonate-rock aquifer in south-central Nevada (36°N, 116°W). Dense vein calcite has precipitated from the ground

water onto the walls of this sub aqueous cavern⁷. Devils Hole Core DH-11 is a 36-cm long core taken from the wall of the cave at about 30 meters below the water table; it contains an approximately 500,000-year-old continuous record of the paleoclimate ⁸. The core originally was sampled along its length at approximately 1.27 - mm intervals by milling and analyzed for stable isotopic composition by the classical method; it was uranium-series dated using thermal ionization mass spectrometry (TIMS)⁹. In 1998, a new slab was cut from DH-11 for trace-element determination. We analyzed the C and O stable isotope ratios in the new slab samples taken again in 1.27- mm intervals at distances from 165.7 mm to 266.0 mm from the free (outer) face of the specimen. The δ^{13} C and δ^{18} O analyses of the 1998 sample were intended to be used for dating the isotopic time series of the new slab by matching it with the time series from the original slab (analyzed by the classical method) of DH-11.

Calcite re-sampled from core DH-11 was analyzed by the new method. The analytical results, compiled into a data table organized by the reported re-sampling depth of each sample, are given in appendix A. The stable isotope data plotted with the re-sampled depth is shown in Figure 5. An inverse relation results between the oxygen and carbon isotope ratio data, consistent with the pattern reported by Coplen and others (1994)¹⁰.

For a check of method consistency, three samples of the re-sampled material (at approximately 232, 233, and 234 mm) also were analyzed using the classical method. These data are shown in Figure 5 as stars and listed at the bottom of the Table in appendix A. All results differ by less than 0.1 ‰ and this corroborates the consistency of the two methods.

When the series from the resampled material (filled symbols in Figure 5) was compared with the original data (open symbols), two locations from which offsets increased non linearly with depth were identified (Figure 5). This observation was confirmed to correspond with periodic re-positioning of the new slab during milling when it was observed to be slipping in the vise (I.J.Winograd, private communication, 2001). A mathematical correction to the recorded cutting depths was applied to accommodate these re-sampling conditions (Figure 6).

When the results of the new method, with corrected sampling depths, are compared to the classical method (Figure 6), it can be seen that the new method reproduced the isotopic trace produced by the classical method. This is demonstrated by a linear correlation between isotope values of approximately 0.96 for both isotopes, after correcting for an alignment offset. Hence, the new method can be used as an alternative to the classical method. In the case of the DH-11 sample, both methods allow one to stratigrafically align cores by matching stable isotope patterns, a useful capability in paleoclimate studies; however, because the new method requires less sample material, it

⁷ Winograd, I.J., Landwehr, J.M., Ludwig, K.R., Coplen, T.B., Riggs, A.C., Szabo, B.J., Kolesar, P.T. and Revesz, K.M. *Science*. 1992; **258**: 255-260.

⁸ Landwehr, J.M, Coplen, T.B., Ludwig, K.R., Winograd, I.J., and Riggs, A.C. U.S. Geological Survey Open-File Report 97-792. 1997; 8 p.

⁹ Ludwig, K.R.; Simmons, K.R.; Szabo, B.J.; Winograd, I.J.; Landwehr, J.M.; Riggs, A.C.; Hoffman, R.J. Science. 1992; 258: 284-287.

¹⁰ Coplen, T.B., Winograd, I.J., Landwehr, J.M. and Riggs, A.C. Science. 1994; 263: 361-365.

permits finer resolution over the length of the core, thus finer temporal resolution of the material.

In addition, this work demonstrates the method's utility for making stratigraphic connections between cores by matching stable isotope patterns, e.g. allowing one to agedate new core material by reference to previously dated material.

Conclusion

A new method was developed to analyze small samples (approximately 400 µg) of calcium carbonate (calcite) for the stable isotope ratios of carbon and oxygen. The new method streamlines the classical H_3PO_4 – $CaCO_3$ reaction method by making use of a Thermoquest-Finnigan GasBench II preparation device and Delta Plus XL continuous flow, isotope ratio mass spectrometer. Results from analysis of three different reference materials were evaluated statistically; the method was seen to produce unbiased and precise estimates of $\delta^{13}C$ when the acid reaction time was between 24 and 54 hours, and of $\delta^{18}O$ when the reaction time between 24 and 54 hours. Aliquot screening methods were shown to further minimize the total error. The method was tested by analyzing calcite from Devils Hole, Nevada, core DH-11, and its utility is confirmed by its capability to reproduce results, thereby allowing one to stratigrafically align cores by matching stable isotope patterns.

Care must be taken to check the precision of the standards, because reruns might be necessary. These additional analyses require time, but overall the automation of the GasBench II method results in considerable time savings. An additional advantage of the new method is that it requires less sample materials; hence, allowing analysis when sample amount is limited or when finer sampling resolution is needed. These advantages make this method a viable alternative to the classical method.

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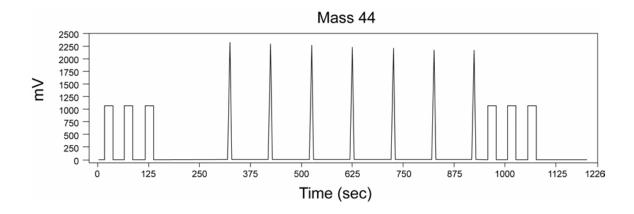


Figure 1. Typical chromatogram of analyzes; each individual sample had a sampling set of seven gas aliquots bracketed at both ends by three reference gas injections pulses.

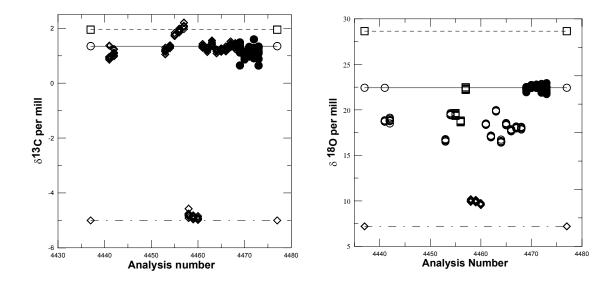


Figure 2. Results of analyzing for $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ isotopes of standard reference materials using GasBench II at 65°C and two different reaction times (overnight shown with open symbols and 1.5 hours shown with filled symbols). One analysis number represents 7 gas aliquots of a sample. Diamonds represent NBS-18 reference standard; squares are NBS-19, and circles are USGS working standard material; dash line with dot, dash, and solid lines represent published value of the reference standard respectively.

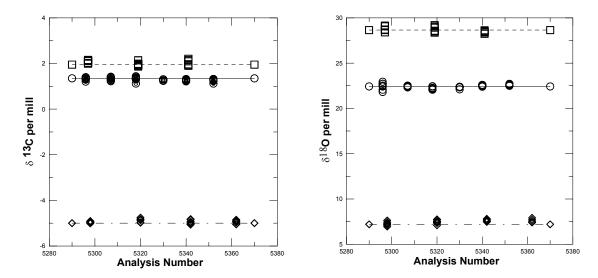
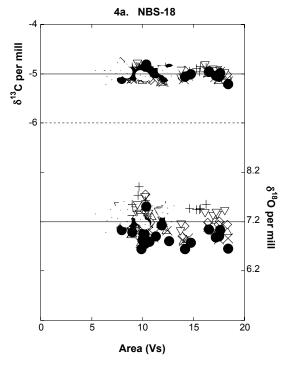
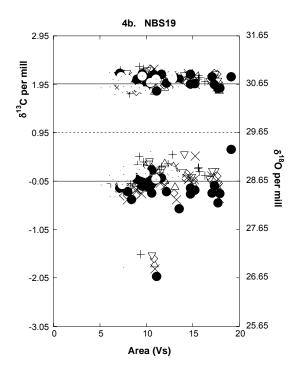
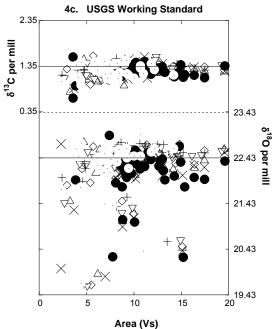


Figure 3. Results of analyzing for $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ isotopes of standard reference materials using GasBench II at $26^{\circ}C$ and between 24-54 hours reaction time. One analysis number represents 7 gas aliquots of a sample. Diamonds represent NBS-18 reference standard, squares are NBS-19, and circles are USGS working standard; dash line with dot, dash, and solid lines represent published value of the reference standard materials respectively.







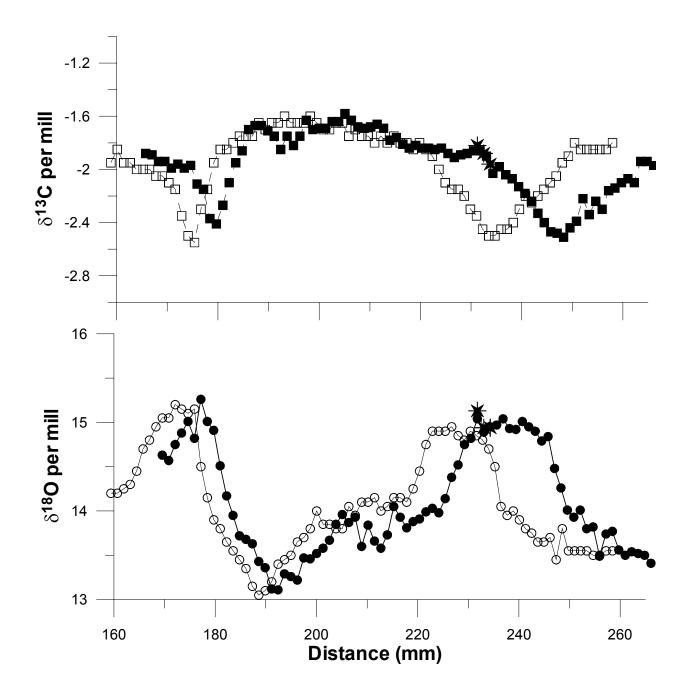


Figure 5. Stable carbon and oxygen isotope ratio profiles obtained by the GasBench II method for the re-sampled DH-11 core material compared to the original DH-11 analysis by the classical method. Filled symbols indicate data profiles of the re-sampled DH-11 core material obtained by the GasBench II method and star symbols indicate analysis of the same core by the classical method; open symbols indicate data profiles from the original DH-11 analysis obtained by the classical method, as reported by Landwehr and others (1997).

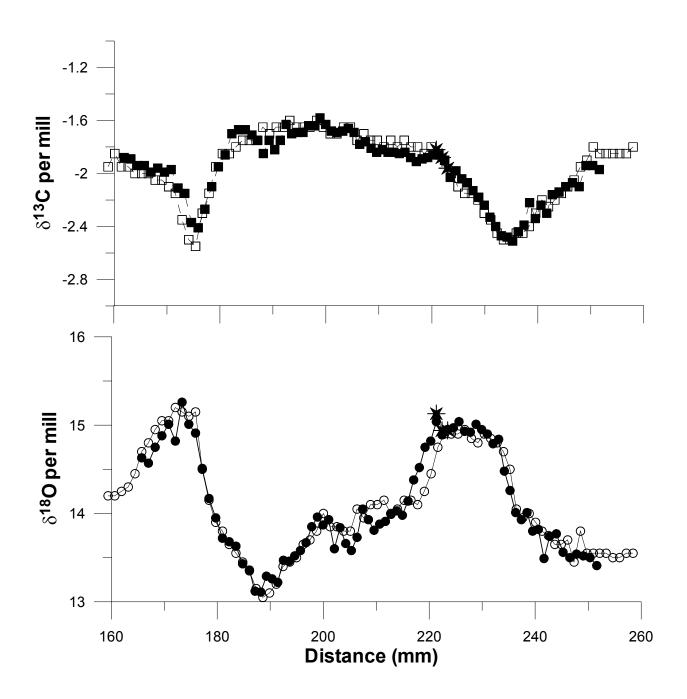


Figure 6. Stable carbon and oxygen isotope ratio profiles obtained by the GasBench II method for the re-sampled DH-11 core material, with appropriate sampling depth correction applied, compared to the original DH-11 analysis by the classical method. Filled symbols indicate data profiles of the re-sampled DH-11 core material obtained by the GasBench II method and star symbols indicate analysis of the same core by the classical method; open symbols indicate data profiles from the original DH-11 analysis obtained by the classical method, as reported by Landwehr and others (1997). The linear correlation between the isotope values generated by the classical and the new method is > 0.96 for both isotopes.

Table 1a. For $\delta^{\scriptscriptstyle 13}C$ analysis, for all 88 samples from three-reference standards run concurrently with field samples, statistics pertaining to bias and pooled standard deviation, among all and pooled analyses and analyses separated by reaction time, and the number of analyses in each category. All units are in ‰.

Reference Category	All analyses	Pooled analyses	Samples analyzed 24-34 hours after acid injection	Samples analyzed 34-54 hours after acid injection		
Average bias						
All Samples	-0.01 *	-0.01 *	-0.01 *	-0.005 * #		
NBS-18	+0.01 *	+0.01 *	+0.03 R	-0.03 * r		
USGS Working Standard	-0.08 ^R	-0.08 ^R	-0.10 ^R	-0.05 ^R #		
NBS-19	+0.08 R	+0.08 R	+0.07 R	+0.09 ^R #		
Standard Error of Bias						
All Samples	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.02		
NBS-18	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.02		
USGS Working Standard	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.02		
NBS-19	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.03		
Standard Deviation of Bias						
All Samples	0.15	0.10	0.11	0.09		
NBS-18	0.09	0.05	0.05	0.04		
USGS Working Standard	0.16	0.09	0.09	0.08		
NBS-19	0.11	0.07	0.07	0.09		
Average pooled standard de	eviation					
All Samples		0.09	0.09	0.08		
NBS-18		0.08	0.08	0.08		
USGS Working Standard		0.10	0.12	0.07		
NBS-19		0.08	0.08	0.10		
Number of analyses						
Number of analyses						
All Samples	n=616	n=88	n=61	n=27		
All Samples NBS-18	161	23	17	6		
All Samples						

^R Reject the null hypothesis Ho: average bias = 0 (t-test), at $p \le 0.05$ level.

^{*} Cannot reject null hypothesis that average bias is 0.

r: Reject the null hypothesis Ho: average bias (samples with time \le 34 hours) = average bias (samples with time between >34 hours), at p \le 0.05.level.

^{#:} Cannot reject null hypothesis of equality of average bias.

Table 1b. For $\delta^{18}O$ analysis, for all 88 samples from three reference standards run concurrently with field samples, statistics pertaining to bias and pooled standard deviation, among all and pooled analyses and analyses separated by reaction time, and the number of analyses in each category. All units are in ‰.

Reference Category	All	Pooled	Samples Samples		
	Analyses	Analyses	analyzed	analyzed	
			24-34 hours	34-54 hours	
			after acid	after acid	
			injection	injection	
Average bias					
All Samples	-0.11 ^R	-0.11 ^R	-0.16 ^R	-0.02 * #	
NBS-18	+0.004 *	+0.004 *	-0.004 *	+0.03 * #	
USGS Working Standard	-0.24 ^R	-0.24 ^R	-0.35 ^R	-0.02 * r	
NBS-19	-0.02 *	-0.02 *	-0.02 *	-0.04 * #	
Standard Error of Bias					
All Samples	0.02	0.05	0.07	0.02	
NBS-18	0.02	0.03	0.04	0.04	
USGS Working Standard	0.04	0.09	0.13	0.04	
NBS-19	0.03	0.07	0.10	0.04	
Standard Deviation of Bias					
All Samples	0.49	0.45	0.53	0.12	
NBS-18	0.24	0.14	0.16	0.10	
USGS Working Standard	0.62	0.57	0.67	0.13	
NBS-19	0.40	0.36	0.43	0.11	
Average pooled standard de	eviation				
All Samples		0.19	0.21	0.14	
NBS-18		0.20	0.22	0.16	
USGS Working Standard		0.20	0.23	0.13	
NBS-19		0.17	0.18	0.15	
Number of analyses					
All Samples	n=616	n=88	n=61	n=27	
NBS-18	161	23	17	6	
USGS Working Standard	273	39	26	13	
NBS-19	182	26	18	8	

^R Reject the null hypothesis Ho: average bias = 0 (t-test), at $p \le 0.05$ level.

^{*} Cannot reject null hypothesis that average bias is 0.

r: Reject the null hypothesis Ho: average bias (samples with time \le 34 hours) = average bias (samples with time between >34 hours), at p \le 0.05.level.

^{#:} Cannot reject null hypothesis of equality of average bias.

Table 2a. For $\delta^{13}C$ analysis, for the 71 samples from all three reference standards that abide by screening rules applied to field samples, statistics pertaining to bias and pooled standard deviation, among all and pooled analyses and analyses separated by reaction time, and the number of analyses in each category. All units are ‰.

Reference Category	All Analyses	Pooled Samples	Samples analyzed 24- 34 hours after acid injection	Samples analyzed 34- 54 hours after acid injection			
Average bias							
All Samples	0.001 *	0.001 *	0.01 *	-0.005 * #			
NBS-18	0.01 *	0.01 *	0.03 R	-0.03 * r			
USGS Working Standard	-0.06 R	-0.06 ^R	-0.07 ^R	-0.05 ^R #			
NBS-19	0.08 R	0.08 R	0.08 *	0.09 ^R #			
	R	R	R	R			
Standard Error of Bias							
All Samples	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.02			
NBS-18	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.02			
USGS Working Standard	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.02			
NBS-19	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.03			
Standard Deviation of Bias		•	•				
All Samples	0.12	0.09	0.09	0.09			
NBS-18	0.09	0.06	0.05	0.04			
USGS Working Standard	0.10	0.07	0.07	0.08			
NBS-19	0.11	0.07	0.06	0.09			
Average pooled standard devia	ation						
All Samples		0.08	0.07	0.08			
NBS-18		0.07	0.07	0.08			
USGS Working Standard		0.07	0.08	0.07			
NBS-19		0.08	0.07	0.10			
Number of analyses	Number of analyses						
All Samples	n=497	n=71	n=44	n=27			
NBS-18	140	20	14	6			
USGS Working Standard	210	30	17	13			
NBS-19	147	21	13	8			

^R Reject the null hypothesis Ho: average bias = 0 (t-test), at p \leq 0.05 level.

^{*} Cannot reject null hypothesis that average bias is 0.

r: Reject the null hypothesis Ho: average bias (samples with time \le 34 hours) = average bias (samples with time between >34 hours), at p \le 0.05.level.

^{#:} Cannot reject null hypothesis of equality of average bias.

R Reject hypothesis of equal means among reference standards (p \leq 0.05)

Table 2b. For δ^{18} O analysis, for the 71 samples from all three reference standards that abide by the screening rules applied to field samples, statistics pertaining to bias and pooled standard deviation, among all and pooled analyses and analyses separated by reaction time, and the number of analyses in each category. All units are ‰.

Reference Category	All Analyses	Pooled Samples	Samples analyzed 24-34 hours after acid injection	Samples analyzed 34-54 hours after acid injection		
Average bias	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	nijection	injection .		
All Samples	-0.04 ^R	-0.04 *	-0.05 *	-0.02 * #		
NBS-18	0.01*	0.01*	0.002 *	0.03 * #		
USGS Working Standard	-0.12 R	-0.12 R	-0.19 R	-0.02 * #		
NBS-19	0.03 *	0.03 *	0.07 *	-0.04 * r		
	R	R	R	E		
Standard Error of Bias			•			
All Samples	0.01	0.03	0.04	0.02		
NBS-18	0.02	0.03	0.05	0.04		
USGS Working Standard	0.02	0.06	0.09	0.04		
NBS-19	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.04		
Standard Deviation of Bias						
All Samples	0.28	0.23	0.28	0.12		
NBS-18	0.23	0.15	0.17	0.10		
USGS Working Standard	0.34	0.31	0.39	0.13		
NBS-19	0.18	0.11	0.10	0.11		
Average pooled standard de	eviation					
All Samples		0.16	0.17	0.14		
NBS-18		0.18	0.20	0.16		
USGS Working Standard		0.15	0.16	0.12		
NBS-19		0.15	0.15	0.15		
Number of analyses						
All Samples	n=497	n=71	n=44	n=27		
NBS-18	140	20	14	6		
USGS Working Standard	210	30	17	13		
NBS-19	147	21	13	8		

Reject the null hypothesis Ho: average bias = 0 (t-test), at p \leq 0.05 level.

^{*} Cannot reject null hypothesis that average bias is 0.

r: Reject the null hypothesis Ho: average bias (samples with time \le 34 hours) = average bias (samples with time between >34hours), at p \le 0.05.level.

^{#:} Cannot reject null hypothesis of equality of average bias.

R Reject hypothesis of equal means among reference standards (p ≤0.05)

E: Cannot reject hypothesis of equal means with one way analysis of variance.

Table 3. Average Root Mean Square Error (‰) among pooled samples, for all samples and for samples categorized by reference standard and by reaction time, for samples from all three reference standards, for both $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ analysis, and the number of samples in each category.

Reference Category	All Samples	Samples analyzed 24-34 hours after acid injection	Samples analyzed 34-54 hours after acid injection			
δ ¹³ C		•				
All Samples	0.11	0.11	0.11			
NBS-18	0.09	0.09	0.09			
USGS Working Standard	0.11	0.11	0.11			
NBS-19	0.13	0.11	0.15			
δ^{18} O						
All Samples	0.21	0.24	0.17			
NBS-18	0.21	0.23	0.17			
USGS Working Standard	0.24	0.30	0.16			
NBS-19	0.18	0.18	0.17			
Number of samples						
All Samples	n=71	n=44	n=27			
NBS-18	20	14	6			
USGS Working Standard	30	17	13			
NBS-19	21	13	8			

Appendix A: Data Tabulation

Huix A. D	ata Tabulation			Corrected		
OurLabID	Field ID	Resampling Depth		Depth	Isotopes (‰)	
OurLabib	riciu ID	inches	mm	mm	δ ¹³ C	δ^{18} O
Run with n	ew method	inches	*****	11111	РС	10 0
	DH-11 6.50-6.55	6.525	165.735	161.935	-1.88	L
	DH-11 6.55-6.60	6.575	167.005	163.205	-1.89	
	DH-11 6.60-6.65	6.625	168.275	164.475	-1.94	
	DH-11 6.65-6.70	6.675	169.545	165.745	-1.94	14.63
	DH-11 6.70-7.75	6.725	170.815	167.015	-1.99	14.57
	DH-11 6.75-6.80	6.775	172.085	168.285	-1.96	14.75
	DH-11 6.80-8.85	6.825	173.355	169.555	-1.99	14.88
	DH-11 6.85-6.90	6.875	174.625	170.825	-1.97	15.01
	DH-11 6.90-6.95	6.925	174.025	170.823	-2.11	14.82
	DH-11 6.95-7.00	6.975	177.165	172.093	-2.11	15.26
		+	+			
C-10709	DH-11 7.00-7.05	7.025	178.435	174.635	-2.37	15.01
	DH-11 7.05-7.10	7.075	179.705	175.905	-2.41	14.91
	DH-11 7.10-7.15	7.125	180.975	177.175	-2.27	14.51
	DH-11 7.15-7.20	7.175	182.245	178.445	-2.10	14.17
	DH-11 7.20-7.25	7.225	183.515	179.715	-1.95	13.95
C-10714	DH-11 7.25-7.30	7.275	184.785	180.985	-1.86	13.72
	DH-11 7.30-7.35	7.325	186.055	182.255	-1.70	13.68
	DH-11 7.35-7.40	7.375	187.325	183.525	-1.67	13.63
	DH-11 7.40-7.45	7.425	188.595	184.795	-1.67	13.43
C-10718	DH-11 7.45-7.50	7.475	189.865	186.070	-1.71	13.36
C-10719	DH-11 7.50-7.55	7.525	191.135	187.139	-1.75	13.12
C-10720	DH-11 7.55-7.60	7.575	192.405	188.208	-1.85	13.11
C-10721	DH-11 7.60-7.65	7.625	193.675	189.277	-1.75	13.29
C-10722	DH-11 7.65-7.70	7.675	194.945	190.347	-1.82	13.26
C-10723	DH-11 7.70-7.75	7.725	196.215	191.416	-1.75	13.22
C-10724	DH-11 7.75-7.80	7.775	197.485	192.485	-1.63	13.47
C-10725	DH-11 7.80-7.85	7.825	198.755	193.554	-1.70	13.46
C-10726	DH-11 7.85-7.90	7.875	200.025	194.623	-1.69	13.52
C-10727	DH-11 7.90-7.95	7.925	201.295	195.692	-1.69	13.58
C-10728	DH-11 7.95-8.00	7.975	202.565	196.761	-1.64	13.67
C-10729	DH-11 8.00-8.05	8.025	203.835	197.830	-1.64	13.85
C-10730	DH-11 8.05-8.10	8.075	205.105	198.900	-1.58	13.96
C-10731	DH-11 8.10-8.15	8.125	206.375	199.969	-1.63	13.87
C-10732	DH-11 8.15-8.20	8.175	207.645	201.038	-1.68	13.93
C-10733	DH-11 8.20-8.25	8.225	208.915	202.107	-1.69	13.60
	DH-11 8.25-8.30	8.275	210.185	203.176	-1.68	13.84
	DH-11 8.30-8.35	8.325	211.455	204.245	-1.66	13.66
	DH-11 8.35-8.40	8.375	212.725	205.314	-1.69	13.58
	DH-11 8.40-8.45	8.425	213.995	206.383	-1.78	13.73
	DH-11 8.45-8.50	8.475	215.265	207.453	-1.76	14.05
	DH-11 8.50-8.55	8.525	216.535	208.522	-1.81	13.93
	DH-11 8.55-8.60	8.575	217.805	208.522	-1.84	13.81
C-10/40	שייים 11-11ס	0.373	417.603	209.391	-1.04	13.01

				Corrected		
OurLabID	Field ID	Resamplii	ng Depth	Depth	Isotopes (%	% 0)
		inches	mm	mm	$\delta^{13}C$	$\delta^{18}O$
C-10741	DH-11 8.60-8.65	8.625	219.075	210.660	-1.82	13.88
C-10742	DH-11 8.65-8.70	8.675	220.345	211.729	-1.84	13.91
C-10743	DH-11 8.70-8.75	8.725	221.615	212.798	-1.84	13.99
C-10744	DH-11 8.75-8.80	8.775	222.885	213.867	-1.85	14.03
C-10745	DH-11 8.80-8.85	8.825	224.155	214.937	-1.84	13.98
C-10746	DH-11 8.85-8.90	8.875	225.425	216.006	-1.88	14.14
C-10747	DH-11 8.90-8.95	8.925	226.695	217.075	-1.91	14.38
C-10748	DH-11 8.95-9.00	8.975	227.965	218.144	-1.89	14.52
C-10476	DH-11 9.00-9.05	9.025	229.235	219.213	-1.88	14.75
C-10477	DH-11 9.05-9.10	9.075	230.505	220.282	-1.86	14.82
C-10478	DH-11 9.10-9.15	9.125	231.775	221.351	-1.86	15.04
C-10479	DH-11 9.15-9.20	9.175	233.045	222.420	-1.90	14.89
C-10480	DH-11 9.20-9.25	9.225	234.315	223.490	-2.03	14.95
C-10481	DH-11 9.25-9.30	9.275	235.585	224.559	-1.98	14.97
C-10482	DH-11 9.30-9.35	9.325	236.855	225.628	-2.04	15.04
C-10483	DH-11 9.35-9.40	9.375	238.125	226.697	-2.07	14.93
C-10484	DH-11 9.40-9.45	9.425	239.395	227.766	-2.13	14.92
C-10485	DH-11 9.45-9.50	9.475	240.665	228.835	-2.18	15.01
C-10486	DH-11 9.50-9.55	9.525	241.935	229.904	-2.24	14.95
C-10487	DH-11 9.55-9.60	9.575	243.205	230.973	-2.33	14.90
C-10488	DH-11 9.60-9.65	9.625	244.475	232.043	-2.40	14.79
C-10489	DH-11 9.65-9.70	9.675	245.745	233.112	-2.47	14.84
C-10490	DH-11 9.70-9.75	9.725	247.015	234.181	-2.48	14.48
C-10491	DH-11 9.75-9.80	9.775	248.285	235.250	-2.51	14.26
C-10492	DH-11 9.80-9.85	9.825	249.555	236.319	-2.44	14.01
C-10493	DH-11 9.85-9.90	9.875	250.825	237.388	-2.39	13.93
C-10494	DH-11 9.90-9.95	9.925	252.095	238.457	-2.22	14.01
C-10495	DH-11 9.9510.00	9.975	253.365	239.527	-2.34	13.80
C-10496	DH-11 10.00-10.05	10.025	254.635	240.596	-2.24	13.82
C-10497	DH-11 10.05-10.10	10.075	255.905	241.665	-2.30	13.49
C-10498	DH-11 10.10-10.15	10.125	257.175	242.734	-2.16	13.74
C-10499	DH-11 10.15-10.20	10.175	258.445	244.000	-2.14	13.77
C-10500	DH-11 10 20-10.25	10.225	259.715	245.270	-2.10	13.56
C-10501	DH-11 10.25-10.30	10.275	260.985	246.540	-2.07	13.50
C-10502	DH-11 10.30-1035	10.325	262.255	247.810	-2.10	13.54
C-10503	DH-11 10.35-10.40	10.375	263.525	249.080	-1.94	13.52
C-10504	DH-11 10.40-10.45	10.425	264.795	250.350	-1.94	13.50
C-10505	DH-11 10.45-10.50	10.475	266.065	251.620	-1.97	13.41
Rerun with	classical method					
	DH-11 9.10-9.15	9.125	231.775	221.351	-1.82	15.13
C-10479	DH-11 9.15-9.20	9.175	233.045	222.420	-1.88	14.94
C-10480	DH-11 9.20-9.25	9.225	234.315	223.490	-1.96	14.94